



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA Offers Financial Assistance to protect Colorado's Playa Lakes

Lakewood, CO – Landowners are encouraged to sign up for USDA's CP23A Program, a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Wetland Restoration, Non-floodplain initiative. CP23A is a part of CRP's continuous signup and applications may now be taken at your local Farm Service Agency Office located in your local USDA Service Centers. As this practice is a part of the CRP continuous signup, enrollments will run until the total acreage has been enrolled or until Dec. 31, 2007, whichever comes first.

This new initiative will allow landowners to enroll large wetland complexes and playa lakes located outside the 100-year floodplain. It will create 250,000 acres of wetlands and playa lakes in non-floodplain areas, which is vital habitat for species such as upland ducks, pheasants and sandhill cranes. Wetlands also filter runoff, recharge groundwater supplies, protect drinking water and reduce downstream flooding. Colorado has been approved to enroll 1,600 acres of the 250,000 acres.

Eligible land includes cropland that has been cropped or considered cropped four of the six years from 1996 through 2001. The land must also be legally and physically capable of being cropped and contracts may be from 10 to 15 years in length.

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The offered acreage must include wetlands that have been cropped and adjacent upland acreage. Wetlands do not need to be drained to be eligible. Up to four acres of adjacent upland acreage can be enrolled for every acre of wetland.

“This program would fully implement President Bush's directive to sustain the environmental benefits of CRP,” states Lewis Frank, FSA Director, Lakewood, CO. “This initiative will help achieve the President's National goal to restore, enhance and protect at least three million wetland acres over the next five years in order to increase overall wetland acres and quality.”

USDA estimates the total cost of the wetlands restoration initiative to be \$200 million. FSA will offer participants an incentive payment equal to 25 percent of the cost of restoring the hydrology of the site, an annual rental payment and cost-share assistance of up to 50 percent of eligible practice installation costs.

If the wetland is eligible for the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) it will not be eligible for CP23A. However, there may be ways to use both practices in the same area. To determine individual eligibility for the initiative, landowners should check with their local FSA office. More information on these initiatives, including acreage allocation by state, is available at local FSA offices and on FSA's Web site at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

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